

FSIS Overview

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The FSIS Animal Production Food Safety Program (APFSP) staff is listening to its stakeholders by conducting commodity needs assessments, establishing and maintaining contacts with the commodities at the policy and technical level, and organizing meetings such as the National Forum held in May of 1995.

The APHIS Veterinary Services Food Safety Management Team initiated formation of several focus groups in 1993 with representatives from the ARS, APHIS, CDCP, FDA, ERS, and FSIS to provide direction for preharvest research activities. One focus group concentrated on *Salmonella*. It determined that it was important to do prevalence studies to answer such questions as what percentage of animals are carriers, what species serve as reservoirs, if there is a higher level at slaughter as opposed to on farm, and what role transportation and marketing play. The focus group also stressed that monitoring and surveillance is an important, ongoing process by which we detect trends or changes. The focus group recommended improved diagnostics and the use of experimental modeling to help predict the effectiveness of proposed interventions.

Currently, APHIS and FSIS are analyzing data from the Swine 95 NAHMS project. Preliminary findings will be presented by an APHIS epidemiologist at this meeting. Some highlights of the study include the finding that *E. coli* 0157:H7 has not been isolated from market swine. *Yersinia*, which researchers think may be the next emerging zoonotic pathogen in swine, was found in 13.3% of samples. *Campylobacter* which causes a significant amount of human illness was found in 24% of the samples. These results add to our knowledge of baseline prevalence and help determine possible managerial risk factors.

For APFSP to make recommendations for present and future policies based on science, epidemiological studies are the first step. Comparable baseline prevalence levels must be developed, followed by risk factor analysis through follow-up studies. Intervention strategy evaluation and cost benefit analysis help determine if we are going in the right direction.

The FSIS APFSP's goals are to enhance private investment in needed applied studies and to provide opportunities for private/public partnerships where funding is available. We envision a review board process for applied studies to assist FSIS in achieving these goals. The process begins with a standing board made up of representatives from federal agencies (FSIS, APHIS, ARS, CDCP, FDA, CSREES, and ERS). The standing board will be charged with developing a process for needs assessment and prioritization. If APFS receives funds for focused applied projects, this board will call for proposals, evaluate them, appropriate funds and develop an accountability process. There will be a technical expertise group with members representing government, industry, academia, and the private sector. This group will be called upon to provide answers on scientific aspects of animal production food safety. A stakeholders group (consumers, commodity representatives, producers, etc.) will provide overall vision of their concerns, feedback to stakeholder groups they represent, collaboration opportunities, avenues to leverage resources, and "real life situation" expertise in the design, development and implementation of applied field research initiatives.